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EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS OF VERNACULAR LANGUAGE CLAIMS AS REFLECTED IN THE BERGER INQUIRY

by

© ANNE VESNA BUTORAC

A THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE STUDIES AND RESEARCH

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research, for acceptance, a thesis entitled Educational Implications of Vernacular Language Claims as Reflected in the Berger Inquiry submitted by Anne Vesna Butorac in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

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ABSTRACT

Currently, vernacular bilingual education which is seen as a response to the language demands of native people, is being implemented in countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Australia. There is growing concern among social scientists that much of the current discussion of bilingual education does not adequately reflect societal dynamics. For native people these dynamics stem from a colonial situation which defines their relationship with the dominant Anglo-speaking community. Analysis of language maintenance claims often rests explicitly or implicitly on explanations in terms of ethnicity, neglecting to take into account the significance of language claims that extend beyond ethnic and linguistic entities.

This study sets out to investigate the genesis and nature of vernacular language claims emanating from the region of the Mackenzie River Valley in Northern Canada. The data base used is the hearings of the Berger Commission Inquiry into the proposed natural gas pipeline along the Mackenzie Valley. This provides a broader societal base in which to contextualize language claims. While it allows for an examination across linguistic boundaries, delineating the social context becomes problematic.

From studies which focus on language in its social context, the central concept of 'speech community' has been used to extend the context beyond the confines of linguistic

code.

An important distinction made with respect to the concept of speech community is that made by Fishman who acknowledges that a speech community can be recognized on the basis of actual verbal interaction (experiential)/on the basis of symbolic integration (referential).

In this study of vernacular language claims, recognition of a referential speech community is seen to have important implications. On the basis of a referential speech community, vernacular language claims are seen to be but one aspect of broader claims being made in response to a colonial situation. The resolution of these claims is not a matter of linguistic accommodation within the existing school system. Bilingual education, whether it aims at language transfer or vernacular language maintenance may not be the resolution to the demands of linguistically marked groups. What this study finally calls into question is the role of the school as an institution of the dominant society.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Folk Bilingualism

Bilingual education or simply education in two languages is not a new phenomenon. For generations students have learned second and third languages in the school situation where the addition of foreign languages was considered an enrichment experience. The 'other' languages in these cases were also languages of wider communication and were in no way regarded as a threat to the national language. It has been commonplace, for instance, for English speaking students to learn languages such as French, German and Italian and more recently Japanese, Russian or Asian languages. Gaarder refers to such bilingualism as 'elitist bilingualism' and differentiates it from 'folk bilingualism.' The former is acquired individually and voluntarily while the latter is acquired of necessity.

> When two peoples, each speaking its own language, must live in a single country, it is likely that one will be dominated, and the dominated one must learn the other's language. (1975:8).

Though he does not expand upon this theme, Gaarder (1976) returns to the notion of folk or societal bilingualism and claims that where it exists it is a reflection of a political stance. He draws some

tentative generalizations to develop this claim, two of which serve as a useful starting point for a neglected area of research into bilingual education.

> Societal bilingual education (even as societal bilingualism itself) takes its dynamics from the relative socio-political status of the two peoples in contact. (p. 2).

In addition,

> bilingual education for the weaker people, since it increases the number of bilinguals and decreases the number of monolinguals is potentially destructive of the weaker language. (p. 3).

It is bilingual education derived from folk bilingualism that is recently enjoying much attention in English speaking countries such as the United States of America, Canada and Australia whose populations include large numbers of immigrants from other countries as well as indigenous people. Current attention to bilingual education focuses largely on the immigrant groups whose languages enjoy national status in their mother country. In Canada, for example, the Royal Commission on Bilingualism and Biculturalism had as its terms of reference to:

> Inquire into and report upon the existing state of bilingualism and biculturalism in Canada and to recommend what steps should be taken to develop the Canadian Confederation on the basis of an equal partnership between the two founding races, taking into account the contribution to the enrichment of Canada and the measures that should be taken to safeguard that contribution. (1967:xxi).

Vernacular Languages

In Canada 'bilingual education' has become almost synonomous with education in English and French. Other

immigrant 'ethnic groups' are acknowledged in the report on bilingualism and biculturalism, but the only reference to vernaculars is an introductory explanation of omission.

However, bilingual education of native peoples as it reflects a political stance is an outstanding example of folk bilingualism and deserving of attention. One of its most distinguishing aspects is that it involves vernacular languages;[1] vernaculars that are historically based on an oral tradition and of which only some have, since colonization, been scripted, but not always on the basis of a Roman orthography. In addition, these vernaculars in the past had not been used for wider communication and many are, in fact, local varieties having only narrow regional currency. All these aspects would appear to be inimical to the use of these vernaculars in formal education. However, despite problems of orthography, diversity of dialect variations, concerns with teacher competency and very limited research findings, bilingual education involving native vernaculars is being promoted and implemented.

A very simple question emerges. Who is interested in the vernaculars and why? The answer to this question entails an examination of two opposing forces meeting in

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[1]The definition of 'vernacular language' adopted here is that used in the UNESCO monograph. "A language which is the mother tongue of a group which is socially or politically dominated by another group speaking a different language. We do not consider the language of a minority in one country as a vernacular if it is an official language in another country." (1953:46).

the school situation and coincidentally seeking, for what I propose are conflicting reasons, to introduce into that arena the vernacular languages. The social forces derive from two groups that have since colonization represented divergent interests and yet have existed in a relationship which itself evolved out of these divergencies. One group was from the outset the intruder and was to become economically, politically and linguistically dominant. The other, the marked group, was to become economically, politically and linguistically disadvantaged in its relationship with the former.[2]

Relationships between Europeans and indigenous people in North America and Australia have been based on the former's unquestioned assumptions of their racial and cultural superiority and their right to treat the indigenes as subject peoples. Historically, racism has been a common colonial phenomena. As Schemerhorn claims, the two are so closely linked that exceptions are rare. He does point out though that:

> While colonization promoted racism in the long run, the historic path toward that end had many twists and turns. In the dramatic expansion of Europe after the fifteenth century, early contacts of explorers, traders, and

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[2]Following Fishman "that language is marked in a bilingual education setting which would be most likely not to be used instructionally were it not for bilingual education" (1975:8). 'Marked' group is used here in preference to 'disadvantaged' group to overcome any connotations of pathology of the group. Whatever disadvantage can be said to exist is one incurred within the relationship between the two groups.

> adventurers with the peoples of Oceania, Asia, Africa, and the Americas awakened such diverse responses and counter-responses that generalities are hardly possible. (1970:114).

The Canadian situation is illustrative of such diversity. From the time of earliest contact the relationship between European and native people has undergone frequent modifications. Vallee briefly overviews different historical periods and the differing impact upon native people. Prior to 1950, though missionaries and traders attempted to institute some change, it was not as drastic as the large scale cultural transformation attempted since that period.[3] Vallee does claim however, that at all stages the relationship between the two reveals the inequality in what he refers to as the "historical 'zeitgeist' of imperialism, with its assumption of white, Christian moral superiority." (1971:152).

This assumption of white superiority has instigated large scale exploitation, the nature of which has attracted much discussion in recent years. One recently recurring theme of analysis comes from critical theorists using the

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[3]Ray (1974) reviews the period 1660-1870 and focuses attention on the way different Indian groups in Manitoba and Saskatchewan reacted to the changing opportunities offered by the fur trade. A significant point he makes is that the early fur trade period was an integrating force between Indians and Europeans as the successful operation of the fur trade was advantageous to both groups. By the latter part of the nineteenth century however, declining opportunities in the fur trade placed the Indians in a weaker position in relation to the traders.

colonization model.[4] This approach overcomes the weakness of studies which address culture contact as a situation of two distinct and discrete cultures meeting in an acculturative exchange. Rather, by drawing on a colonial framework the relationship between the two - that of colonizer and colonized - is highlighted. Individual examples of such studies are Carstens (1971), Fisher (1976), Chance (1974), and Adams (1969), while Watkins (1977) brings together a collection of presentations to the Berger Inquiry, all of which develop the theme, "Dene Nation: The Colony Within."

Though the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized is basically one of economic exploitation and leads to what Frank (1966) claims is the development of under-development, the economic motivation of colonialism has broader socio-political implications. In essence, the situation of contact between the two groups has been, in the anthropological sense, one of total cultural invasion.

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[4]This model is recently being used more frequently by analysts of minority groups. In Canada, for example, Milner and Milner (1973) apply it to the situation of the French in Quebec. In the United States of America, colonialism has provided a fruitful strategy for analyzing various groups, e.g., Moore (1970), Blauner (1969) and Flores (1973). In their application of the general framework, these analysts recognize different structural categories within the rubric of colonialism. Moore, in a study of Mexican Indians distinguishes three categories on the basis of political participation at mass and elite levels. Blauner examines black-white relations and distinguishes between classical colonialism and internal colonialism. Flores uses an internal colonial model to look at racism and exploitation of a broad range of non-white minorities in the U.S.A.

Caulfield elaborates what she calls 'imperialist exploitation' taking Marx's basic class contradictions of exploitation and extending them to a colonial situation:

> As expanding capitalism, with its industrial base in the home country, encountered and engulfed nonindustrial cultures, the dominant system developed modes for exploiting not just the labour power of these subject peoples, but their entire cultural patterns. (1974: 193).

It is this all-encompassing cultural encounter that addresses the question of use or abuse of vernacular languages in the contact situation. In Canada, policy towards language in education aimed at denigrating native vernaculars through monolingual English instruction.[5] This was directly related to the assumption of cultural superiority and seen as a means of assimilating native people into the European way of life. The acquisition of English was part of the envisaged cultural transformation.

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[5]Daniels notes efforts by early mission schools to "record, codify and provide basic formal instruction in Indian languages as well as in English . . . but it was a trend that later suffered some severe reversals" (1973:56). Senator James Gladstone, for example, recalls his experiences at the St. Paul's Anglican Mission at the end of the nineteenth century. "In those days, the teachers were dedicated to their work. They used to urge us to speak English and those who were on their best behaviour got five, ten or fifteen cents on Saturday. This money came from the teacher's own pocket. I remember I was punished several times for speaking Blackfoot" (1967:19). More recently the appendix to the Daily Register for Recording the Attendance of Indian School Pupils offered the following suggestions to teachers. "Every effort must be made to induce pupils to speak English and to teach them to understand it. Insist on English even during the supervised play. Failure in this means wasted efforts" (1945-1946:660).

Language Maintenance

As native people reject this cultural transformation they are also examining the role of the school and the part it has played in the denigration of vernacular languages. The rationale for native people's interest in vernacular education and linguistic maintenance rests implicitly or explicitly in terms of ethnicity. One of the landmarks for the more recent work on language and ethnicity is Fishman's (1966) study of language loyalty in the United States, which substantiated Glazer and Moyniham's (1963) questioning of the American 'melting pot' ideology. Languages, be they localized vernaculars or languages of wider communication of migrant minorities, survive despite generations of concerted effort to replace them with national lingua-francas. Cultural and linguistic diversity are now espoused in a new pluralistic ideology, replacing that of the 'melting pot'. Demands of different language groups to have their languages recognized by the school system are seen as an outcome of this cultural and linguistic survival. Language is seen as the embodiment of ethnicity. Von Maltitz (1975) predicts increasing pressure by various ethnic groups for bilingual education. Fishman reviews ethnicity historically and like von Maltitz foresees re-ethnification as a force that will have a sustaining and creative power for years to come:

> In sum my prediction is that when your great-grandchildren and mine celebrate the 300th anniversary of the U.S.A., there will still be non-Anglo ethnic

> maintenance and non-English language maintenance. (1976:21).

The terms 'ethnic' and 'ethnicity' often remain unclearly defined. Vallee, in a comprehensive discussion on the meaning of ethnicity states that:

> Ethnicity refers to descent from ancestors who shared a common culture or subculture manifested in distinctive ways of speaking and/or acting. (1975: 165).

He stresses that though the common culture may be transmitted by different kinds of groupings, "kinship networks are crucial bearers of the culture."[6] Though ethnicity can be activated, it is fundamentally static and normative.[7] People adopt a particular ethnicity by virtue of the fact that they are born into that group. As such it is an inactive rather than an emergent form and survives through time largely unchanged.

Explanations of demands for language maintenance in terms of ethnicity do not explain why it is more or less important for different groups, nor why at this time and place in history re-ethnification is such a powerful force. Fishman (1976 a) does acknowledge that what we have today is a new ethnicity, an ideologized ethnicity, "revitalistic, messianic, and powerfully moving" and one that has never

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[6] 'Ethnicity' in these terms is closely linked with 'culture', a term which will be used exclusively in later discussion of native claims.

[7] c.f. Valee's 'subjective' and 'objective' dimensions.

been that before in America. The underlying implication is that this new movement is something which takes us beyond the reductionist argument of ethnic maintenance for its own sake. From the point of view of the linguistically marked languages in bilingual education, research cannot afford to limit itself to 'ethnicity' or 'language' per se. Such research will not only fail to get at other fundamental significances of language demands of marked groups; it may obscure them.

Research Needs

If research into bilingual education is to go beyond explanations in terms of ethnicity and language, what is required is the sort of research that will account for linguistic markedness within a general theory of social, economic and political relations. As yet, no substantial effort has been made in this direction. Trueba in a paper presented to the annual meeting of the American Anthropological Association discusses research needs in bilingual education and claims:

> It is, perhaps, the lack of involvement of social scientists in bilingual education which has left linguists and practioners with the burden of investigating the outcomes of diverse types of bilingual education programs. No wonder our very conceptualization of bilingual education ignores socio-cultural dimensions! (1976:2).

Paulston (1974) in an earlier paper presented to the Interamerican Conference on Bilingual Education attempts to interpret research findings on bilingual education within a

broader social theory. Though she acknowledges the importance of quantification and statistics, her stated bias is the anthropological emphasis on qualitative research. She draws heavily on Schemerhorn's inductive typology in ethnic relations and Wallace's schema of revitalization movements. Admitting that this framework does not account for all the facts of bilingual education and that it should only be seen as a direction that could be taken in interpreting research on bilingual education, she invites us to consider other alternatives.

> Without question, there are other theoretical approaches possible, but it is very clear to me that unless we try in some way to account for the sociohistorical, cultural and economical-political factors which lead to certain forms of bilingual education, we will never understand the consequences of that education.[8] (1974:3).

If we accept Paulston and Trueba's concerns with the need to account for the sociohistorical, cultural and economic-political factors leading to bilingual education, the most fruitful direction of current study comes from those disciplines with an orientation towards language in a social context. Delineating and operationalizing 'social context'

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[8]In a more recent paper Paulston surveys the theoretical perspectives on bilingual education as they fall within the two major paradigms - the functional or "equilibrium" paradigm and the conflict paradigm. She claims that much of the work on bilingual education is purely descriptive while the bias of most theoretical studies is structural functionalism. Her final call is for "the development of a dialectical research perspective in bilingual education, which would help specify the theoretical approach most likely to be fruitful in answering questions of a specified nature." (1977:169).

however, has been problematic. If the present directions in the study of language in its social context are examined, some major obstacles become obvious, but in addition, certain guidelines can be suggested.

Defining "Social Context"

Though the term 'sociolinguistics' is recently coined, the study of language and its relation to social phenomena is by no means novel. Historically the questions posed and the approaches adopted by the various disciplines to investigate this relationship arose out of the prevailing social and intellectual climates. Likewise, what is taken to be the social context reflects the universality or particularism of the times. Though the humanities generally have been interested in the social impact of language, the major thrust has come from sociology and anthropology.

Generally the anthropological and sociological perspectives have emerged in two closely related areas of study, but which, by virtue of their different emphases, adopt different methodological approaches. Though in recent literature 'sociolinguistics' is used to refer to both approaches, Fishman distinguishes between that term and 'sociology of language.' The common concern of both is with the interdependence of language and social phenomena. Fishman notes that:

> Both are concerned with the interpenetration between societally patterned variation in language usage and variation in other societally patterned behaviour,

> whether viewed in intra-communal or in inter-communal perspective. (1972 c: 8).

However, while sociolinguistics stresses the "societally patterned variation in language usage," the sociology of language starts from the basis of "societally patterned behavior" and attempts to relate it to linguistic phenomena. The problem of defining a social context can be understood within these differences. Either language, language varieties or ways of speaking define the context, or alternatively the context is determined by sociological constructs emanating from the study of social groups.

Speech Community

A concept which seeks to bridge these differences and which is addressed within both the sociology of language and sociolinguists is that of 'speech community'. According to Hymes:

> Speech community is a necessary, primary concept in that, if taken seriously, it postulates the unit of description as a social, rather than linguistic, entity. One starts with a social group and considers the entire organization of linguistic means within it, rather than start with some one partial, named organization of linguistic means, called a "language." (1974: b:47).

Despite acceptance of the speech community as a frame of reference, the concept has been, and still is, open to debate. For many, either explicitly or implicitly, the linguistic base is posited to delineate boundaries. Bloomfield's (1933) statement is perhaps the most explicitly couched in terms of language. Though on the one hand he claims "a speech community is a group of people who interact

by means of speech," he proceeds to exemplify, through English, the cohesiveness of language in defining boundaries despite geographic and political isolation. In his example, it is obvious that many of these English speakers never interact. In addition, he is inevitably drawn into the dilemma of what constitutes a language boundary. Sherzer (1965) also interchanges 'speech' and 'language.' Though he admits the boundaries of speech communities are difficult to define, he postulates them as the recognizable differences between particular language systems.

Other less obvious examples of linguistic determinism come from sociolinguists, who like Hymes, claim the necessity to study language in the context of a community of speakers. Cognizant of de Saussure's (1959) distinction between la parole and la lange, they have focused on speech, seeking to determine what needs to be known by a community of speakers to effectively interact. Though they move away from the abstractions of language interna and study language in its social context, they still are concerned with the linguistic pursuit of arriving at the underlying regularity of language usage. Labov's (1969) study of negro children in New York city for example, examines the logic of the non-standard variety of English spoken. What he is concerned with is arriving at the grammaticality and patterns of use of speech. Other scholars extend this essentially normative approach to language related phenomena such as kinesics (Birdwhistell, 1970), regulation of participation (Philips, 1974),

sequencing in conversational openings (Schegloff, 1968), the place of silence in speaking (Basso, 1970), and rules of address (Ervin-Tripp, 1969).

Though much of the impetus for these studies has come from Hymes, they have not resolved the problem of how to postulate a speech community as a social rather than a linguistic unit. If, as he claims, the concept is central to the study of language in its social context, his comment on the bounding of a community should be considered.

> Many have implicitly assumed a "natural" unity among members of a community in virtue solely of identity, or commonality, of linguistic knowledge; but no real community can be accounted for as produced by merely mechanical "replication of uniformity." (1974 b:47).

As studies of language in social context have proliferated, the concept of speech community has undergone refinements, some of which overcome the weaknesses mentioned and enhance its applicability to a bilingual situation involving vernacular languages.

One important addendum to Bloomfield's earlier formulation is the acknowledgement that within a speech community may be found several varieties of a language or even several languages, akin to what Fergusson refers to as diglossia. Gumperz, perhaps because of his experience in situations of language contact, as early as 1962 claims that bilingual and multilingual speech communities are the rule rather than the exception. A valuable contribution he makes is the notion of 'repertoire' as the totality of linguistic means of an individual or community. 'Repertoire' is also

used by Hymes (1974 b) and Fishman (1972 b). To support the idea of a verbal repertoire, the notion of 'network' is also adopted to account for interaction within the repertoire. Hymes and Fishman, though recognizing several varieties in a speech community, hasten to stipulate the commonality of at least one variety and the knowledge of its rules of use.

However, as the notion of speech community has been developed, the greater scope afforded it in its goal to include more variables in description has not resolved the question of boundaries. On the contrary, the parameters of what constitutes a speech community have become more problematic. The problem is not merely one which plagues the researcher of language in its social context, but, as I hope to illustrate later, is also of significance to applied fields such as bilingual education.

Various other closely related concepts which have been posited in sociolinguistics illustrate the attempt to delineate contexts of study. In his early work, Gumperz uses the term 'linguistic community' to refer to a

> social group which may be either monolingual or multilingual, held together by frequency of social interaction patterns and set off from the surrounding areas by weaknesses in the lines of communication. (1962:31).

As in the case of speech community, as referred to by Hymes and Fishman, the boundaries set are loosely defined by 'social group.' In each case, the unit under discussion can vary from a number of individuals to a nation. Gumperz, for example, in extending his discussion to types of linguistic

communities begins with small bands of hunters and gatherers and progresses to tribal, peasant, rural and highly urbanized communities. In so doing, his linguistic communities rely on the definitional adequacy of the social units suggested.

In subsequent writing, Gumperz replaces 'linguistic community' with 'speech community' and acknowledges the problem of defining boundaries. Though he suggests that the boundaries of speech communities tend to coincide with social units such as country, tribe, religious and ethnic groups, he does admit that:

> The adequacy of existing methods for delineating communities or other types of social groups has been a subject of considerable controversy in recent years.[9] (1972:16).

As Gumperz states, a community can not be presumed on the basis of just ethnic identity, territory or linguistic varieties. It is important to examine also "the existence of shared values and of regular communication patterns."

The notion of shared values is also found in Neustupny's (1968) 'sprechbund'; or speech area. Different language areas may share rules for ways of speaking; for

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[9]This problem of boundaries of collectivities is not restricted to discussions of linguistic code vis-a-vis a group. It is evident in a wide range of social science literature and is a problem also in inferential statistics. Barth (1969), for example, challenges the notion of ethnic groups as bounded and discrete units. The Helm (1968) volume addresses the problem of defining tribe and several papers stress the emergent nature of tribes in response to contemporary sociopolitical contexts.

example, what topics are considered appropriate, sequencing in conversations and manner of greetings. Hymes draws on Neustupny but hastens to stipulate that 'sprechbund' should not be confused with 'speech community'. Knowledge of the rules of speaking must be accompanied by knowledge of the speech itself. Reluctant to abandon entirely the delineation in terms of speech, there is however an increasing emphasis on the social situation and a recognition of shared values emanating from that situation.

To synthesize the discussion so far and to add some clarity to the definitional problems of 'speech community' it is necessary to turn to a distinction which comes from the sociology of language. In his discussion of the concept, Fishman recognizes that a speech community can be construed on two different bases. Membership in a speech community can be on the basis of actual verbal interaction (experiential) or on the basis of symbolic integration (referential), "within reference networks which may rarely or never exist in any physical sense." (1972 b:24). The former calls attention to language as a code for communication: the latter allows for consideration of socio-political factors and at the same time calls for an examination of that which inspires integration. Language as a code for communication may be significant to such a community or it may be peripheral to other factors. According to Hymes, language users must be given scope to determine what differences or similarities are significant. Factors such as native conceptions, values, purposes of

interaction, political history are all relevant and he goes on to suggest that "part of the work of definition obviously is done by the notion of community." (1972:55).

The guidelines that have emerged can be briefly summarized. If we are to describe a speech community which is not determined solely on linguistic grounds, (i.e. language code, variety or registers) but which emerges from a broad social context, Fishman's referential basis must be considered. What becomes crucial however is the enunciation of the sense in which a given population can be said to be integrated. This opens up the possibility of applying Hymes' postulate of a speech community as a social unit of description that "considers the entire organization of linguistic means within it." It also opens up the possibility of following Paulston in trying to account for the "sociohistorical, cultural and economic-political factors which lead to certain forms of bilingual education."

In this investigation to determine why native people in Canada want to maintain their vernacular languages, the problem can be formalized as the investigation of two possibilities. Claims for language maintenance may rest upon an experiential speech community construed on the basis of actual or potential verbal interaction in a specific language. Alternatively, claims for language maintenance may emanate from a referential speech community construed on the basis of symbolic integration, without including as a manifest and salient descriptive category an actual language or code.

It should be pointed out that the two possibilities are not considered to be mutually exclusive. The existence of a symbolically integrated speech community does not preclude the existence of a speech community or speech communities based on common linguistic codes. What becomes essential in an investigation of vernacular language claims is that where the former does exist, its presence be acknowledged and its genesis examined. It is in essence an acknowledgement that language claims may be but one expression of a broad range of claims. These claims should be seen as a whole. Bilingual education, if it is to be implemented, should then evolve from this whole.

Currently in Canada many speech communities can be identified on the basis of distinct vernacular language varieties. However, if we are to allow for the possibility of a speech community which integrates symbolically across these distinctions, the investigation of language claims must be made from data which incorporate as broad a range of linguistic varieties as possible. Such a data base has recently become available in the form of the Berger Commission Inquiry into the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, the nature of which will be discussed in the following chapter. In an attempt to determine why native people want to maintain their vernacular languages, the Berger Inquiry hearings will be examined to determine which concept of 'speech community' the data support. Implications for bilingual education will then be suggested.

CHAPTER 2

BERGER COMMISSION INQUIRY

Currently in Canada, demands for vernacular language maintenance are coincidental with other demands being pressed by native people. The Berger Commission Inquiry has provided a platform for the expression of these demands and as such provides a data base for this study into the nature of language claims. Before examining the content of the recorded hearings of the inquiry, some preliminary comments will help to (1) establish its nature and scope, (2) determine its relevance to this study and indicate the manner in which the material is analyzed.

Nature and Scope

The inquiry which was instigated by the Government of Canada began in the spring of 1975 and lasted eighteen months. Headed by Mr. Justice Thomas Berger of the British Columbia Supreme Court, the inquiry conducted investigations into the environmental and social effects of the construction of a natural gas pipeline from Alaska, along the Mackenzie Valley, and into Southern Canada and the United States of America. Apart from the formal hearings in larger centres, the commission responded to a request by native organizations to conduct community hearings in smaller towns and settlements likely to be affected by the pipeline development. These

community hearings were also extended to all provincial capitals and Ottawa giving Canadians across the nation the opportunity to participate.

Though the official hearings largely involved lengthy testimonies on economic and technical aspects of pipeline construction, the community hearings provide an extensive source of data of native opinion.[1] There appears to have been no reluctance on the part of native people to express themselves. The protracted length of the hearings bears witness to the degree of involvement and the numerous newspaper and journal articles describing the actual proceedings acknowledge the importance communities attached to the inquiry. Language of communication was not a barrier for the inquiry was replete with translators in all the languages involved. Nor was the social setting the psychological barrier it could be in government sponsored proceedings. The format of the community hearings was conducive to the pace and style familiar to each locality.

Transcripts of the entire inquiry amount to several hundred volumes. Of these, over two hundred relate to the official inquiry and seventy-seven to the community hearings. Berger's extrapolations of the hearings and his recommendations

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[1]It is acknowledged at this point that the opinion is only that of those who testified to the inquiry. However, all were free to participate and if native people are strongly divided in their opinion, the Berger Inquiry imposed no formal restrictions to mask such a division. It is also acknowledged that in any such inquiry, reliance on written transcripts may overlook subtle informal restrictions generated by the public nature of the proceedings.

to the government are now available in his (1977) report. In this study of vernacular language claims, most use will be made of the community hearings, though material may also be drawn from the official inquiry. The referencing procedure to be adopted to distinguish between the different hearings will be to designate the official proceedings as P.I. and the proceedings at the community hearings as C.H.

Relevance to this Study

As indicated in the previous chapter, if a broader referential speech community is to be recognized, the data must transcend linguistic boundaries. The Berger Commission Inquiry is to date the most comprehensive source of such a data base. Though the focus of the inquiry imposes initial territorial restrictions, it does encompass a diversity of racial, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. In the introduction to his 1977 report, Berger states that "the Mackenzie and Western Arctic is a vast land where people of four races live, speaking seven different languages." (1977:vii). The races he refers to as 'whites,'[2] 'Indians,' 'Inuit' and 'Metis.' The languages spoken are Loucheaux, Hare, Slavey, Dogrib, Chipewyan, Inuit and English. As background to the sociocultural implications of the pipeline,

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[2]In a note on terminology he discusses the efficacy of using 'whites.' Though he recognizes that the people who have come to the North are of many races, he adopts the terminology used consistently throughout the hearings by the native people themselves.

he also discusses briefly the distinctive material and intellectual cultures of the area. He emphasizes the fact that;

> each of these peoples had its own way of hunting, of making clothes, of raising children, of dealing with one another, and of regarding the environment and the spiritual powers they saw as integral to their world. Their knowledge of the land and its life constitute distinctive ethno-scientific traditions. (1977:7).

The distinctiveness of the ethno-scientific traditions is perhaps most obviously manifested in the linguistic diversity he mentions earlier. Loucheaux, Hare, Slavey, Dogrib and Chipewyan belong to the Athapascan language family. Howren (1971), in an investigation of these languages, along with Bearlake and Mountain, suggests they comprise a common subgrouping of the Athapascan language which he calls Northeastern Athapascan. Crowe (1974) refers to tribes who speak dialects of the Athapascan or Dene language. Notwithstanding the problem of whether we are speaking of different dialects or distinct languages, the significant point is that as well as (though not necessarily corresponding to) cultural differences, linguistic differences can also be found. Berger (1977) analogizes the relationship of the Athapascan languages to that which is found between the Romance languages of Europe.

The Inuit speak dialects of the same language which has been noted for its remarkable uniformity over a wide area. However, it is unlike any of the Indian languages and Berger comments that despite the fact that the Dene and the Inuit have been in contact and that there is an overlap of

hunting grounds, "the linguistic contact between them even today is so limited that virtually no words have been borrowed from one another." (1977:7).

Testimony presented to the Berger Inquiry is drawn from these cultural and linguistic differences. In addition, the community hearings which were taken to other parts of Canada gave native people from still other backgrounds the opportunity to be heard. The point to be made is that the data used in this study emerge from a population that is at the outset diversified, and that if respondents deem that relevant, this distinctiveness can be stressed. In relation to the concept of speech community, the data base is sufficiently encompassing to allow for either an experiential or a referential speech community to emerge.

If language claims emanate solely from speech communities which are identified on an experiential basis, the data could be expected to indicate the overriding concern with distinct languages and to emphasize vernacular language maintenance as a factor in maintaining networks on the basis of verbal interaction. If however language claims can be seen to emanate also from a speech community which integrates symbolically on some other basis, the data could be expected to reveal less concern with distinct linguistic codes. Furthermore, claims for language maintenance would address themselves to the situation which has inspired integration across linguistic boundaries.

A further aspect of the inquiry's relevance to this

study is that it highlights the situation in which native people find themselves; the inquiry addresses the conflict inherent in the northern social context. Berger, in the introduction to his report, claims:

> The north is a region of conflicting goals, preferences and aspirations. The conflict focuses on the pipeline. The pipeline represents the advance of the industrial system to the Arctic. The impact of the industrial system upon the native people has been the special concern of the Inquiry, for one thing is certain: the impact of a pipeline will bear especially upon the native people. That is why I have been concerned that the native people should have an opportunity to speak to the Inquiry in their own villages, in their own languages, and in their own way. (1977:viii).

It follows then that if as Gaarder claims "societal bilingual education (even as societal bilingualism itself) takes its dynamics from the relative socio-political status of the two peoples in contact" (p. 2) the Berger Inquiry provides an opportunity to analyze the dynamics of vernacular bilingualism which in turn will bear upon vernacular bilingual education.

Berger's final comment raises another issue of relevance. In Chapter 1 it was suggested that in the implementation of bilingual education current explanations of claims for language maintenance were inadequate. Major problems of research in this area have to do with sources of information and are particularly pertinent in this study of vernacular language claims. At base they are problems of epistemology and are familiar to those who, like anthropologists and sociologists have gone into an unfamiliar social context and through participant observation tried to arrive at what

Bruyn (1966) refers to as the "inner perspective." Because of the nature of the Berger Inquiry it is possible in this examination of vernacular language claims to analyze data stated in the terms and categories of the informants.[4]

In a sense, Berger was a participant observer, but one whose observations can be read in an unextrapolated form in the official transcripts of the hearings. One important feature distinguishes these observations (and in my view enhances their validity) from those of other fieldworkers. The informants' responses were not structured by any preset or specified questions posed by Berger. Within the overriding question of the significance of the pipeline, informants were free to pose their own questions and reactions. It is reasonable to assume that the topics raised and the context in which they are discussed indicate the importance attached to them.

A study of this length must be selective of such a vast amount of material and inevitably impose its own structure upon it. The nature of this imposition has already been suggested. Of necessity, much will be omitted and much will be abbreviated. The process of selection is basically twofold. Primarily, certain topics will be

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[4]Testimonies to the inquiry derive from several broad categories of informants; from individual native people; from representatives of native organizations; and from others who attempt to represent the native experience from some academic interest. Most reliance will be placed on the first two sources, though the latter will be drawn on where it further develops arguments raised by native people themselves.

highlighted and the rationale guiding this flows from the discussion so far and from Paulston's challenge to research in bilingual education, i.e. the need to account for sociohistorical, cultural, economic and political factors.

Second, the study might appear to be selective in neglecting to account for contradictory evidence. On this issue, the material from the Berger Inquiry requires special comment. A cursory survey of the testimonies presented to the inquiry reveals a remarkable degree of consensus among native people. Several explanations may be offered. It might be suggested that contradictory opinions were not sought. However the reference made earlier to the scope of the hearings and the opportunity created for people to speak without restraint refutes such a suggestion. A more valid explanation is one which takes into account the traditional political process of decision making based on consensus.[5] In part also, the degree of accord may stem from the intensity

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[5]This is suggested in the often repeated support native people gave to other speakers' testimonies and the concern they had to know what was being said in other communities. A. Arrowmaker of Rae Edzo, for example, regrets "I don't think it's fair to go and consult with one chief at a time to make sure whether they agree with the pipeline or not. We don't know what the next chief is going to say because they are supposed to meet together and discuss the matter with them themselves." (Vol. 72:8084), For a discussion of traditional decision making processes see Berger (1977:87,95). Bean, Cheezie and Kurzewski (Vol. 150); Barnaby (Vol. 144).
Note: The precedent set in this footnoted quote will be followed throughout, i.e. quoting the testimonies verbatum. Though grammatical errors occur frequently, the meaning and intent of the citings is always clear and the researcher's corrections would, in fact, interrupt the flow and weaken the impact of the statements.

with which native people are reacting to what they see as a threat to their survival.

Before presenting the necessarily abbreviated native perspective, some comments need to be made on the procedure adopted, as a background to this study and also as a guide to others who may wish to use this data source which is rich but formidable in size. Because of the nature of this investigation, most use was made of the seventy-seven volumes of community hearings. These were read several times. The first reading aimed at an overall impression and at the same time focused on isolating statements around themes considered relevant. These statements were re-read many times and are the basis of the following chapter. A final reading of the community hearings was undertaken to counter any possible cognitive set in the reader which may have overlooked significant contradictory evidence. At this stage a complete listing of references to education and language in the community hearings was compiled and is available in Appendix A. An alternative strategy was adopted with the formal hearings of the inquiry as there were fewer statements by native people and much of the material involves more technical aspects of the pipeline. References to relevant issues in the formal hearings were traced through the comprehensive index to the transcripts prepared by the inquiry staff and through the summaries of the proceedings prepared by Indian and Northern Affairs (1976).

Chapter 4 which surveys the data is developed around

three themes. The first investigates the basis and nature of self identification of native people testifying to the inquiry, in order to establish the basis and nature of the sense in which native people can be seen to be integrated. To further ascertain the applicability of the two notions of speech community proposed, the second theme looks at statements on language. Finally, native people's perceptions of education will be examined, primarily because the original question posed (p. 3) has to do with vernacular education, but also as a means of confirming the consistency of claims made in the proceeding themes.

CHAPTER 3

REVIEW OF BERGER MATERIAL

Integration of Native Society

A study of the testimonies presented by native people to the Berger Inquiry reveals the accommodative process by which people are able to redefine themselves in terms of their common experience. Though the redefinition lacks a single referent, its expression is one of the most consistent themes throughout the hearings. Individual testimony is repeatedly prefaced or supported to include an ever-widening community. John Simon, speaking at Fort McPherson, states:

> What I have said and was said by the people of this community was said or will be said by all other communities along the Mackenzie River, since all Indian people live a life similar to each other. (C.H. Vol. 13: 1252).

It is to be expected that common concerns be found within the setting where the pipeline and the inquiry surrounding it are of immediate consequence. That the inquiry itself generated interest and discussion is obvious. Not only was the issue a focus within particular towns and settlements, but was followed closely in the media which reported in the different languages on proceedings from other hearings.

The pipeline and the Mackenzie Valley, however, are but the immediate realization of a much broader sense of common identity. Often, aboriginality is stressed.

P. Thrasher, for example, at Aklavik presents his testimony to include all those who were the first to come to the North and says:

> I am not talking only for the Inuit, I am also putting a word in for the Indian and the Metis, because I think everybody wants to work in union, that is how I feel the spirit, and how I think the spirit is amongst all of us, and I am quite proud of it. (C.H. Vol. 1: 137).

Along with aboriginality, the testimonies also stress a common dependence on the renewable resources of the land. Throughout the hearings, old people and young people testified to the importance of land. Some were still almost wholly dependent on it; some were partly dependent and yet others wanted to return but regretted lacking the knowledge to do so. Joe Naedzo speaks not just for the people in Fort Franklin, but for "all of those people who are still living off the land, and all of the N.W.T." (C.H. Vol. 9: 812). As it is still the experience of many people in the North,[1] living off the land can also be anticipated as a common denominator around which native people integrate. The significance of living off the land goes beyond the necessities of day to day survival, though the threat to this

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[1]Apart from individual testimony, this is further substantiated by the research study into Dene land use and occupancy conducted by the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories and reported in the Proceedings of the Inquiry, Vol. 147 and 148. It is further discussed by P. Usher on behalf of C.O.P.E. (Committee on Original Peoples Entitlement) and the I.T.C. (Inuit Tapirisit of Canada). The selected readings in Watkins (1977) present a good overview of the historical and current use of the land and its resources.

imposed by the pipeline was repeatedly raised at the hearings. Berger refers to the special relationship "native people of Canada, and indeed indigenous people throughout the world" (1977:93) have to their land. He documents from the hearings how native people relate to the land as something that links them to the past, which holds security for the future and around which the complex whole that is culture has evolved over the centuries. It is obvious that they are desperately defending this, for according to J. T'Seleie from Fort Good Hope:

> Life off the land is hard, and there are many times when a lot of people I think come pretty close to the end of their lives. So the message I think is that the people of the north will approach the pipeline question with the same kind of determination that it takes for them to live off the land, and living off the land is - well it's a life and death struggle. (C.H. Vol. 20:2070).

However important aboriginality and survival on the renewable resources of the land are as a common bond and in whatever way it was expressed it is apparent that opposition to the pipeline is circumscribed by larger issues. These issues also serve to further broaden the parameters by which people see themselves as one. From within the region of the proposed pipeline development, analogies are drawn to experiences of native people in other parts of Canada. Mary Showshoe from Fort McPherson speaks of "what has happened to our brothers in the south and our Eskimo brothers." (C.H. Vol. 13:1172). Mrs. R. Andre from Artic Red River

says, "We know what's happened in Alaska and what they have to go through. Also, James Bay."[2] (C.H. Vol. 47:4602). Correspondingly, from outside the Mackenzie Valley area similar utterences are made. J. Amagoalik, speaking at Ottawa on behalf of the Inuit Tapirisat, includes in his concerns "all the native people of this country." (C.H. Vol. 64:7199). H. Spence, a treaty Indian from Nelson House in Northern Manitoba, speaking to the inquiry at Winnipeg, is "in total agreement with my fellow Indian people in the Northwest Territories." (C.H. Vol. 57:6249). Such support is also forthcoming from the Blackfoot Reserve; from the Indian Brotherhood; from the Union of Ontario Indians; from the Metis and non-status Indians of Prince Edward Island; from the Labrador Inuit Association and from the American Indian Movement. These people may or may not share with the Mackenzie Valley residents an existence on the land. They may or may not have experienced the impact of a massive technological development such as the pipeline. However, beyond these considerations they do share certain consequences of being native. Mrs. R. Charlie speaking for the Indian Homemakers' Association of British Columbia expresses concern

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[2]The happenings in Alaska and James Bay both involved development projects akin to that proposed for the Mackenzie Valley. In Alaska, the series of migrations since early settlement by Europeans has surged recently with oil and gas discoveries on the Kenai Peninsula in the 1960's and the construction of the Alyeska pipeline south from Prudhoe Bay. The James Bay hydro development project, after much negotiation, resulted in the flooding of Cree Indian lands in Northern Quebec.

for her "northern brothers and sisters," whose fraternity she anticipates.

> We have suffered poverty, ill-health, poor housing, low education, very high unemployment, and discrimination. We know what can happen to our sisters and their families and the communities in the north. We want to warn them and help them from destruction. (C.H. Vol. 51:5082).

Also from Vancouver, P. Paul makes a similar claim:

> We in the south can speak with deep conviction about the ill effects of industrialization and urbanization when too much emphasis is placed on a quick dollar for outsiders, and not enough attention is given to the quality of life for all living things that inhabit the area. (C.H. Vol. 50:4898-4899).

Over and above more localized affiliations native people may feel, it is this destruction imposed from the outside that has been highlighted by the pipeline inquiry. This is the essence of the process of redefinition. The process has accelerated as intensified external imposition has shaped a common recent history and activated common concerns for the future.

From community to community this recent history is described. Though it is set from the time Europeans first came, the most vivid accounts of drastic change focus on the past twenty years. For a long period, the native economy survived around the fur trade and the symptoms of dependency were averted. Asch (1977) surveys the Dene economy as it has changed since European contact. He traces it from the aboriginal period when cooperation in self sufficient groups was central to survival, through the earlier fur trade period which saw little change in the aboriginal patterns. The

early twentieth century heralded an increase in the fur trade, which brought about an increase in wealth. Asch goes on to suggest that though this had little effect on the "internal dynamics of production and circulation within the native economy," it did however have "an unexpected consequence: dependency." (1977:52). With more reliance on outside goods facilitated by the increase in wealth, the price of fur became a crucial factor in the stability of the native economy. This was borne out by the impact of the fall of the fur prices in the 1940's. According to Berger:

> It was the long depression in the price of fur in the years after the Second World War that led to the collapse of the northern fur economy in the 1950's. When the fur market failed, the federal government had to come to the aid of the native people. (1977:87).

This period of 'government aid' starkly stands out in the memory of many of the witnesses to the Berger Inquiry. While but a few see some elements of immediate benefit derived from the so-called aid, to most it signifies added burdens and hardship in their efforts to survive. The recent history is one of extended government efforts in the areas of economic development, housing, health, welfare and education. It is important to understand the native perceptions of these efforts. For example, in the words of F. Barnaby at Fort Good Hope:

> Too many developments, like opening of schools, hostels, liquor store. The moving in of the Territorial Government, who thought they were doing something good, brought in rental houses and welfare. Since all this started it's just destroying our way of life. (C.H. Vol. 20:2018).

M.R. Drybone of Fort Good Hope is less magnaminous about the government's intentions:

> Then in 1958 the Government program slowly crept into this community. Like the hostels, whiteman's education, low rental houses, and the worst of them all alcohol and welfare.
>
> You think the Dene beg on their knees for those programs? No way. The so-called Government threw it at us and we accepted their trick. (C.H. Vol. 20:1941-1942).

B. T'Seleie of Colville Lake also is suspicious of aid and stressed the dependency that is concomitant with it and how this is destructive of the independence people had when they relied on the land:

> That independence, you know, is the independence that the government is taking away from us. They're taking it away from us in all kinds of ways. They're taking it away from us through rental houses, where a family doesn't even have responsibilities anymore. Where things are so comfortable, you know, oil and water delivered, everything, everything done for you, and you don't even have to get your children to help you work, they're free all the time and it keeps you from going back to the bush too, because you get to depend on the services that they give you. Whereas a man took pride in shooting a moose, and fishing, you know, to feed his family, there's welfare to replace that. There's so many ways, you know, to kill a culture, and I'm pretty sure that the government has used them all. (C.H. Vol. 75:8330-8331).

Many other similar statements indicate that native people are becoming increasingly aware of the destruction of their culture and the forces imposing that destruction. Some of the statements are purely descriptive, outlining the life of the past, the contact with Europeans and the experiences of people today. Others however go further and attempt to analyze the relationship between these. G. Erasmus, president of the Indian Brotherhood of the N.W.T.

speaking to the inquiry at Rae Edzo, overviews the community hearings and presents a more encompassing analysis. He analyzes the destruction of native societies within a framework of European colonization.[3] The colonial experience has negated the historical past and imposed a new way of life in which native people are no longer actors, but acted upon:

> We were not defining life any longer. History was being defined for us. A new kind of education system was set up for us. Everything that was imposed on us was teaching us how not to regard ourselves as a specific people, how to disconnect ourselves from the historical past that is specifically a unique experience of the Dene and the whole experience up until now, has been that we Dene should forget who we are and we should now assimilate into a superior way of life. (C.H. Vol. 72:8062).

As claimed by Erasmus, one aspect of the colonial experience was that Europeans named native people as "Indians," "non status Indians" and "Metis." To reject this imposition, native people have begun by naming themselves, for to accept these definitions amounts to accepting the process of colonization.

> We called ourselves Dene. Simply translated, we were the people as different from the animals. With the coming of Europeans, we experienced a new way of life. Before the coming of the Europeans, we the Dene defined

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[3]This form of analysis is further developed in other testimonies presented to the inquiry. Bean, Kurszewski and Cheezie (P.I. Vol. 144, 150) discuss the colonial political institutions in the N.W.T. Puxley (P.I. Vol. 154) discusses at length the dehumanizing relationships of colonialism and their relevance to the notion of development. Manuel (P.I. Vol. 143) elaborates upon the political nature of problems facing native people in the colonial situation. For a synopsis of articles around this theme, see the Watkins (1977) collection of articles from the Berger Inquiry.

> history in our own terms. We decided the kind of communities we wanted to be. We decided the way we wanted to live. (p. 8061-8062).

The designation "Dene" finds its equivalent in "Inuit" the term preferred by the people referred to by Europeans as "Eskimo" (raw meat eater). B. Lafferty at Fort Simpson elaborates on the meaning of "Dene" in Slavey. As he explains, it does not refer specifically to Indian people but to any human being.[4] This process of renaming and redefining themselves is one indication that native people are seeking to reclaim their history, to again decide the way they want to live. By naming themselves 'people,' they are emphasizing their humanity.

According to Brazilian educator Paulo Freire, the essence of humanity is the ability to name the world and to change it. His treatise on the pedagogy of the oppressed bears relevance to the situation of native people whose statements to the Berger Inquiry indicate they have begun to name their world. Though Freire emphasizes the

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[4]Bernt and Berndt discuss the change in tribal names of Australian Aborgines and "the attempt to arrive at a general social identification in terms of aboriginality." (1964:37). One of these is the generic 'Nunga' (people) used to distinguish people of aboriginal descent from white people. Fried, talking about tribal names, claims, "it is a common place that such names are often derived from two particularly frequent sources: from a designation applied to a population by outsiders or from a word equivalent to the concept "person" or "human being." He further adds, "I would like to argue, although I cannot substantiate the point now, that such names are proteanly flexible through space and time and probably have always varied situationally as well." (1968:13-14).

necessity of both reflection and action,[5] in naming the world, the oppressed, through dialogue, must develop a critical perception of their social reality.

> To surmount the situation of oppression, men must first critically recognize its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity. (1968:31-32).

Dialogue, of which the Berger Inquiry has been a part, is uniting native people of diverse cultural backgrounds as they enunciate a common cause of their oppression. The data investigated confirm the existence of a community which integrates symbolically in response to the colonial situation. This community however will also be subject to redefinition as native people engage in the transformation of their social reality.

Language Claims and Speech Community

From a confirmation and elaboration of native people's common reaction to the colonial imposition, it is now necessary to examine the statements on language and to establish the descriptive adequacy of the alternative speech communities proposed.

The most striking observation to be made from a study of the Berger materials, is the way in which people from

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[5]This theme is encompassed by the term conscientização which is defined by Freire as "learning to perceive social, political and economic contradictions, and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality." (p. 19).

different language and dialect groups refer to language. Very rarely are specific languages named. Rather, the testimonies simply refer to "my language," "our language" or generic terms of a more inclusive nature are used, such as "Inuit languages," "Dene languages," "Indian languages" and "Native languages." Aboriginality of the people finds its correspondence in language. M. Tanner at Inuvik, for example, wonders what is going to happen to the "original people that were here" if further development takes place and suggests, "most of us or all of us are going to lose our original language." (C.H. Vol. 39:3747). Chief Albert Canadien at Fort Providence relates the efforts of his Band Council to establish for "native students" a programme "primarily to encourage the students, the children, to talk in their native language again." (C.H. Vol. 68:7894).

Through many similar statements about the loss of language and efforts of native people to retain their mother tongue, it is obvious that vernacular language maintenance is important. However, the fact that particular language varieties are not emphasized, confirms the redefining process discussed earlier. Rarely are sentiments expressed which suggest that Hare, Dogrib, Loucheaux, Slavey, Chipewyan or Inuit are in themselves crucial to a correspondingly distinctive way of life. Rather, just as the colonial experience has served to antithetically define 'white man' and 'native people,' so the English language has served to juxtapose the original languages. In whatever

linguistic community, the loss of the mother tongue has been at the hands of the English language and the system it represents. The imposition of English is seen as part of the total cultural imposition. According to Richard Nerysoo at Fort McPherson:

> White people bring their language, their political system, their economy, their schools, their culture, They push the Indian aside and take over everything. Their "progress" means the end of Indian freedom, the end of the Indian nation. (C.H. Vol. 13:1190).

Similarly, P. Green at Paulatuk claims that:

> many people today does not speak very freely their own language because of the influence that white man brought. As you can tell, I and other older people as well, does not speak our own tongue. (C.H. Vol. 46:4436).

Where the "influence of the white man" has not been so strong, the original language has been retained, as for example, the Eastern Arctic, of which Meeka Wilson says:

> Sometime I think we Inuit in the east have been lucky. We have been allowed to keep our own language, simply because we have not had the same influx of southerners. (C.H. Vol. 65:7575).

It is not a difficult task to reconstruct from the testimonies the immediate consequences of a colonial imposition of English. When we turn from a recounting of past experience and its impact on language, to examine language aspirations for the future, the statements made to the Berger Inquiry are less specific and consequently subject to interpretation. The interpretation, though it may appear to be arbitrary, is determined basically by the notion of speech community accepted. Many statements dealing with language reveal a pragmatic concern for the loss of

indigenous languages. This concern is well illustrated by P. Thrasher's autobiographical account to the inquiry at Aklavik:

> I was born in 1930 and I went to school for about five years, and then my grandfather took me on the trapline. When I went to school I was speaking Eskimo, and when I left it I was speaking English, so when I talked to my grandfather he didn't understand me, but one thing he did for me, he called me stupid, because I couldn't talk my own language anymore. It took quite awhile to get back to my language in order to understand him again. You know that was quite a hit for me, I was kind of glad, because he taught me many things to do. He told me stories of many people who lived in this country, and we have lots of stories, but he said, the things that he said and how they made a living in this country. He talked about the whaleboats, he talked about the ships that came into the country, and the first he saw white people. . . . (C.H. Vol. 1:13-14).

Taken in isolation, Thrasher's statement and others which deal with the consequences of individuals lacking essential tools of communication are a reminder that the concept of speech community proposed on the basis of actual verbal interaction should not be discarded. It is in fact particularly pertinent in a culture which is transmitted orally.

However if retained in isolation, such statements have a nativistic and all too simple implication. Losing facility in a language amounts to losing a way of life; regaining or maintaining that language amounts to restoring that way of life. Thrasher's account is one individual's rendition of a more general plea which is expressed by Mrs. E. Townsend at Tuktoyaktuk for "the tie that binds my language, the life that I have lived." (C.H. Vol. 45:4383).

Statements such as this present an enigma. How central to what has been lost is language? G. Watts asks, "Can we survive as a people if our language dies?" (C.H. Vol. 51:5082) and L. Norbert pleads, "Help us, help us regain our language and our culture and pride of being children of Indian and Inuit ancestry." (C.H. Vol. 2:75).

Watt's question is at first glance reminescent of the argument that language is an embodiment of ethnicity and that language maintenance claims can be explained solely in terms of ethnic maintenance. However, Watts speaks to the inquiry at Vancouver as a representative of the Tcheshalt tribe and his use of 'we' suggests a concern not just for the language of his tribe, but also for the languages and cultures of the North which he is addressing. Norbert's plea in the singular 'our language' obviously subsumes a plurality. Townsend's 'tie that binds' may be seen as her Slavey identity and the Slavey language which is her mother tongue, but she herself provides a qualification because in the next sentence she refers to the reverence she has "for the older people of my community and of this community [Tuktoyaktuk] and in the north generally."[6]

There is sufficient evidence in the Berger material to suggest that native people are transcending specific

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[6]Townsend indicates at the outset of her testimony that as she is not from Tuktoyaktuk she does not speak the Eskimo language but would prefer to address herself in Slavey which is her mother tongue.

linguistic loyalties. They are expressing language claims not exclusively on the basis of an experiential speech community, but to a greater extent on the basis of a referential speech community. This speech community is generated by, and in turn serves to consolidate, the process of culture building previously suggested. If vernacular language claims are to be understood they must be contextualized within the broader community described earlier. Furthermore, if they are to be applied to education, it is also necessary to understand that community's perception of education.

Education

In the developing awareness of the impact of the colonial situation, education emerges throughout the testimonies as one of the most potent agencies in destroying cultural and linguistic self determination. It would be wrong to claim that educational concerns override the significance of the central land claims issue. However, the transition to English is most closely linked to the educational institution. L. Norbert at Aklavik talks about the young people who feel alienated and "quite frustrated at the education system that is robbing them of their culture and their language." (C.H. Vol. 2:75). B. Shae from Fort Good Hope says:

> I have been away from the land for 14 years because of education and I don't want that, I want the land. I lost my tongue, my native tongue. All I do is talk white

man language almost all my life. (C.H. Vol. 20:2007).

Distinctions are made, often implicitly, between formal education provided by the school system and education in the sense of transmission of indigenous cultures by learning from parents and older people. Most of the discussion selected from the testimonies is the critique of the former,[7] though it is obvious that great importance is attached to the learning of traditional skills and appreciating native history. A further distinction is often made between education provided by Church missionaries and that provided by government schools. The strongest condemnation is of the government sponsored education system. Mrs. B. Allen, for example, claims that "the only educational system that did any work for the people of the north, is the mission education system." (C.H. Vol. 15:1448). Other comments supporting this view point to the less academic, more practical orientation of the mission schools.

Noticeably few testimonies speak of education as something which is considered to have been of value to native children. Several acknowledge their own schooling experience as providing them with knowledge and skills to understand and cope with the situation in which they find themselves today. However, this has been expressed as an unanticipated outcome of education. Those who have had

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7'Education' will thus be used to indicate the system of schooling imposed upon native people by the dominant society.

formal schooling are best able to appreciate what it does or does not offer. For most, this has meant appreciating the futility of education when it has not led to participation in the workforce. It has also provided these people with sufficient expertise to assume positions of leadership and negotiation. In the words of A. Rabisca from Fort Good Hope:

> We are the new generation and have wakened up. We know what's going on. The white man educated us, oh yes they educated us to maybe go alongside with them but we haven't. They taught us to be a little smarter and some day that we turned against them. This day and age, it's happening, and I do believe that our younger generation, which is coming up next behind us, will fight harder for this land. (C.H. Vol. 20:2062).

On the whole, native perceptions of education are even more negatively connoted. At the most general level, education spells cultural genocide. To A. Arrowmaker at Rae Edzo, "it seems like what the government intention is to have native people or persuade native people to become like or act like White people." (C.H. Vol. 72:8081). G. Blondin, also from Rae Edzo says:

> It was more of an indoctrination to prepare me for a job in the white man's world. I was not educated in a way that was human, that gave me pride and dignity in being a Dene, with our own history, our own culture, our own traditions and our own language. (C.H. Vol. 71:8049).

In a similar vein, the irrelevance of the school learning has been stressed by people from different regions. It is seen as a Southern system imposed on Northern people. Though some educational observers would point to apparently significant changes in structure and content in recent

years,[8] Rosie Savi at Fort Franklin, through an interpreter claims:

> The children may be educated, she says, but what they have been taught, the children do not live by. You know, whatever has been taught in schools is not the way our children live . . . . Like it has no reference to the Indian way of life. (C.H. Vol. 9:805).

The consequences of an education that was not "human" and one that the "children do not live by" have taken their toll in individual and social terms. Prior to the impact of a formal and alien educational system, the knowledge and skills required were imparted within an extended family network. Schooling which necessitated children being away for extended periods of time, caused major disruption to the family as a social unit. For some it meant resettlement. According to Chief J. Lockhart of Fort Resolution, speaking through an interpreter:

> He said in the past we used to take our families out in the bush and spread out all over, and camp, and we made our living that way before in the past. Nowadays he says it's just different altogether. We have to be here because the kids have to go to school. (C.H. Vol. 32: 3055).

For many others in remoter settlements, the consequences were

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[8]Note, for example, the current Northwest Territories curriculum handbook which purports to develop a programme which makes "it possible for the individual to choose among and between such possible life patterns as: the wage-earning economy; trapping; fishing, hunting economy; guaranteed annual income economy, and leisure-oriented social living. The emphasis must be open-ended in that the developing individual is free to make his choice, rather than having his future predetermined by the educational system." (p. 4). Note also the 1976 ordinance which acknowledges the concept of 'local control,' practised for the past six years at Rae Edzo. In this light, the testimonies at Rae Edzo are particularly relevant.

more critical for it meant having to send their children away to school. Many have felt this literally as a loss of their children. Joe Martin, relates to the inquiry at Colville Lake how his mother "didn't want to give him up to send him back to the boarding school again." She resisted even R.C.M.P. pressure[9] to keep him at home and teach him hunting and trapping skills. Reflecting on this, he says, "I'm glad that my mother didn't send me back to school, and kept me and taught me how to be what I am now." (C.H. Vol. 75:8338).

Martin's conclusions are in accord with testimonies of those who did leave home to attend school. Mrs. J. Ross from Norman Wells attended a government hostel from the age of six.

> By the time I completed my High School it didn't even feel like I had an education. Why? I think the reason was being away from the people whom I needed. I needed their affection and I needed their strength, and I don't think I ever got it from them. But I'll never send my children to a hostel, no, never. If it has to be

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[9]Other pressures were also exerted on native parents. Mrs. A. Noksana at Tuktoyaktuk testifies to the threat of family allowance being withdrawn if children were not sent to school. J. Caeser at Fort Good Hope also mentions threats by teachers and local government people that government aid would be forfeited. In his doctoral dissertation Daniels discusses educational aspects of the Indian Act of 1951. One dealing with attendance and truancy gives power to truant officers to search out any child believed to be truant and "convey the child to school, using as much force as the circumstances may require." (1973:109). Failure to comply could result in a fine or imprisonment. He also discusses the present status of the Indian parent. Indians living on Reserves have some freedom to provide for instruction out of school, but the rights of those living off reserves are officially prescribed by provincial legislation.

> education or no education, then there will be no education for my children, for I believe there are more important things than education. (C.H. Vol. 21:2193).

Statements such as these attest to the alienating experience of formal education. Many have described the difficulties of returning home as strangers and in the words of A. Tobac at Fort Good Hope, having to "bridge that gap that they call sometimes too much education." (C.H. Vol. 20:1983). It would be erroneous to suggest a total rejection of formal education. There are those who still hold to the notion that education is the key to involvement in a wage economy and urge for more education for their children. However, overwhelmingly the feelings expressed reveal a disenchantment with what formal education has meant in the past. These feelings are perhaps best expressed by P. Paul at Vancouver:

> We have seen our children painstakingly grapple with the white educational system, trying to become white people only to see their own being shattered and to be condemned to a life of unemployment, welfare and penal institutions. (C.H. Vol. 50:4900).

Like Paul's statement, many of those presented to the inquiry indicate that education and its effects are seen as part of a whole system. It is in fact difficult to isolate what native people have said about education, language and the totality of their present social reality. Throughout the three themes developed in this chapter, there has been a consistency which not only substantiates assertions made in each one, but also indicates the inter-relatedness of the three topics. The community into which native people have been drawn was instigated by domination. As native people

attribute the roots of that domination to their relationship with Euro-Canadian society, they are responding by critically examining that relationship. Inasmuch as education and the English language are seen as instrumentalities and symbols of that relationship, they are also being critically examined.

When vernacular language claims are seen in the broad context that the Berger Inquiry has provided, they can be seen to reflect the integration of native people in response to the colonial situation. In other words, vernacular language claims point to a referential speech community whose symbolic integration originates in colonialism. If a common linguistic code is to be suggested for this speech community, it is English as the imposed colonial language. It is not English as a communicative code that is significant, but opposition to it as a tool and symbol of colonialism. In that education is an institution of the colonizing society it has played a major role in this linguistic imposition. Any consideration of bilingual education as a response to vernacular language maintenance claims should take into account these factors.

CHAPTER 4

IMPLICATIONS OF LANGUAGE CLAIMS

Speech Community and Education

To answer the initial question of why native people are interested in vernacular language maintenance, the concept of speech community was taken as a methodological construct. A primary distinction made with regards to 'speech community' was between what Fishman calls the "referential" and "experiential" bases. This allowance for a speech community which is seen to be symbolically integrated though it may be taken as an indication of inadequacy in the concept as a methodological construct, does signify the attempt in sociolinguistics to get beyond the confines of linguistic particularism. The speech community which is construed on the basis of actual verbal interaction is admittedly one that is easier to document. It can be more readily studied empirically and described with the skills developed in the field of linguistics.

On the other hand, the referential speech community, based on "reference networks which may rarely or never exist in any physical sense" is less easily defined. However, where such speech communities exist, their presence should be acknowledged and their origin carefully examined. To confuse the manifestations of one for the existence of the

other could have serious implications for policy planners. This is particularly significant for the current implementation of bilingual education.

If the context for language claims is taken to be the speech community, limited by a definition only in terms of actual verbal interaction through a particular linguistic code, some educational consequences can be anticipated. Vernacular language maintenance becomes an issue focussing on the language of that community and introduction of that language into the school situation can follow along the lines suggested by Spolsky (1974). Sociolinguists can assess the functional and attitudinal aspects associated with the use of that particular code. Linguists can be called upon to research the structures of the language and recommend strategies for literacy programmes. In short, if the speech community is defined on this basis, though initial problems may present themselves, the incorporation of vernacular languages into the existing school structure does not present insurmountable problems. Leaving aside, for the moment, any discussion of the specific natures of the programmes, those instances where bilingual education has been incorporated into the school system in the United States of America, Canada and Australia indicate, to varying degrees of effectiveness, this sort of process. The underlying assumption is that a speech community exists only in terms of a language per se and that language claims are resolved on that basis.

Many such speech communities could be isolated within the region of the Mackenzie Valley. For example, Rae Edzo could be seen as part of the speech community defined on the basis of the Dogrib language. Dogrib would, in Hyme's terms, be the basis for a "community sharing knowledge of rules for the conduct and interpretation of speech" (1974:51); knowledge not only of the form, but also its "patterns of use." Claims made for vernacular education interpreted within these parameters could be expected to set in motion the process described earlier. This is in fact the case. Correspondence from the Government of the Northwest Territories (August 26th, 1976) indicates the preparatory endeavours to implement bilingual education programmes into the existing school system. This deals with visits by native language consultants to "discuss ideas for the programme - what precisely will a Dogrib Language Programme consist of; what kinds of materials and services would everyone like to have." In an addendum, specifics of the Dogrib orthography are discussed and certain problem areas raised.

This example of Rae Edzo presents an interesting case. Ostensibly, since 1971 the school has been locally controlled and yet preparatory discussions for vernacular literacy are still taking place. Personal observations during a visit to the school in February 1977 indicated that though Dogrib was still spoken by the children, little effort was made to incorporate it into the school setting beyond

using Dogrib speaking assistants in the kindergarten class to ease transition to school. It seems surprising then that if Dogrib language maintenance is an important concern and that if a community defined in terms of that language has control of education, more evidence of that concern is not witnessed in the school. Two elements of such a situation emerge to be questioned. One relates to local control and one to the significance of vernacular language maintenance.

The question of local control would in itself merit far more serious attention than is permitted here. However, there are grounds on which autonomy at Rae Edzo could be questioned and still further grounds to suggest that education in the vernacular is pursued more vigorously by the Northwest Territories education department than it is by native speakers. The example cited earlier illustrates the efforts of the government to move towards vernacular education. Government direction was also in evidence in Rae Edzo's inauguration. Maclean cites from a proposal submitted by Father Andre Renaud prior to the establishment of the Rae Edzo school society. Of the ten points listed, one claims that:

> Maximum use of classroom aides, parents, and older Dogribs would be made in the first three to five years of the child's schooling, thus allowing a gradual transition to the English language. (1973:114).

It is important to note however, that though Father Renaud submitted the proposal on behalf of the people of Rae Edzo, he was at the time attached to the Indian Education Programme at the University of Saskatchewan which had been approached

by the Director of Education for the Northwest Territories with the suggestion that the university develop a demonstration school at Fort Rae.[1]

Besides doubts about local control, it is still somewhat puzzling that if language maintenance is important, that a community which has at least some input into education, has not more vigorously instituted vernacular education. The testimonies to the Berger Inquiry at Rae Edzo suggest that maintenance of culture and language is important to the people in the community. It is interesting to pursue the example of the Dogrib speakers of Rae Edzo a little further.

Implications of Referential Speech Community

If we take the suggested alternative version of a speech community and apply vernacular language claims to a speech community in terms of symbolic integration, the example of Rae Edzo is illustrative of radically different consequences, primarily for vernacular education, but also for

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[1]With regard to the present status of the Rae Edzo school society, it is also worth noting the 1976 Ordinance respecting education in the Northwest Territories in which item 21, (i), (o) specifies among the duties of the school society, that it will, manage educational premises and programmes "subject to any terms and conditions imposed by the Executive Member." The Director of Education in the Northwest Territories, Brian Lewis, comments in an editorial to the December, 1976 volume of Arcturus that "local control doesn't make the school different" and in fact suggests there is "not as much native language teaching as there is in Rankin Inlet. Lewis assumes though that local control is a reality at Rae Edzo.

other related issues such as local control of education. The immediate question which emerges pertains to the nature of that which is symbolized. As substantiated in the previous chapter, on the basis of a referential speech community, one aspect of language claims of the Dogrib speakers of Rae Edzo as well as speakers of other vernacular languages is opposition to the imposition of the English language.

By pursuing further the broader based speech community of which Rae Edzo is a part, we are forced to go beyond the confines of language maintenance and confront the colonial relationship at its core. In the resolution of the present conflict between native people and the dominant society in Canada, language and more particularly language maintenance claims are playing a part in social change, but there is also evidence to indicate that language maintenance is only a facet of other more encompassing demands. There is no denying that native people are striving to maintain culture specific symbols such as language. Memmi states that at the beginning of a movement towards self-control;

> the colonized's claim is narrowly limited and conditioned by the colonial situation and the requirements of the colonizer. The colonized accepts and asserts himself with passion. (1965:132).

He goes on further to suggest that those features which are distinctive of the colonized's identity and which were most denigrated by the colonizer become highlighted and essential to regaining identity. Along with other aspects of his distinct identity,

> the colonized no longer knew his language except in the

> form of a lowly dialect. In order to emerge from the most elementary monotony and emotions, he had to borrow the colonizer's language. In recovering his autonomous and separate destiny, he immediately goes back to his own tongue. (1965:134).

Memmi cautions however, that there is a danger that this process through which colonized people verify and assert their unity may be taken as an end in itself. Though his analysis of the colonial situation does not indicate how it is to take place, he concludes that "the colonial condition cannot be changed except by doing away with the colonial relationship."[2] (p. 126).

Much can be found in the Berger material to support Memmi's portrayal of the colonial condition. However, the situation of native people in Canada's north has led to a proposed resolution for "doing away with the colonial relationship." The diversity of cultural and linguistic backgrounds has mitigated against focussing on these as a means to assert unity. Rather, the aspect that mobilizes and unifies more effectively across this diversity is the central significance of land. As Manuel and Posluns point out:

> Our relationship with this land and with one another is far deeper and more complex than the relationship between the people of any province and their land, their institutions, or one another. (1974:219).

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[2]Drawing on Raskin's application of colonial political structures in capitalist society, Carnoy draws attention to a common denominator between the developed and the underdeveloped world. "Thus, imperialism colonized everyone but those who make the decisions at the center of the metropole." (1974: 69). Carnoy's analysis implies not just the restructuring of the colonial relationship, but of capitalist society.

The conflict inherent in the colonial relationship is actualized when the land becomes vital to the dominant society as it has currently in the North, where the dominant economy sees potential economic gain in natural resources. This and the more recent examples of liberation in many parts of the colonized world has instigated a revitalization movement[3] which is more sophisticated[4] and the means of which are directed towards economic and political ends.

Of all the claims being pressed by the native people of the Mackenzie Valley region, the most clearly enunciated are those which emanate from land claims. Apart from individual testimonies to the Berger Inquiry which support this statement, the final arguments submitted to the Inquiry by organizations representing native people of this area further substantiate this. At the outset of the submission from C.O.P.E. (Committee for Original Peoples' Entitlement),

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[3]Wallace defines "revitalization movement" as "a conscious, deliberate, organized effort on the part of some members of a society to create a more satisfying culture." (1968:75). In adopting the term, he subsumes others such as 'nativistic,' 'millinerian,' 'utopian,' 'cargo cults' and even refers to them categorically as social movements.

[4]The term 'sophisticated' is deliberately used here to imply that the social movement presently being witnessed among native people in Northern Canada reveals an understanding of their situation and the means to overcome it. It does not, as Memmi cautions, confuse the means with the ends. This judgement is not one of personal evaluation, but one that is consistent with the dependency paradigm which native people have enunciated. Much of the analysis of the colonial situation revealed in native people's testimony is in accord with that being expressed by critical theorists who reject the 'modernization' paradigm of development.

Mr. Bayley states:

> Mr. Commissioner, we begin with the statement that there should be no pipeline before land claims are settled. That is the position that was put to you on behalf of C O P E at the preliminary hearings in Inuvik, and that is the position of C O P E and of the Inuit Tapirisat of Canada, today after 19 months of evidence before you. People in every native community have said that land claims must be settled before the construction of any pipeline, and they have stated their reasons for this demand. They have expressed a widespread and deeply felt apprehension about the impact and implications of a pipeline and of related developments. They fear for their land, their communities, their families and their way of life. (P.I. Vol. 202:31871).

Bayley goes on to point out that neither COPE nor ITC has as yet submitted a formal proposal to the Government of Canada, but "the fundamental objectives of the land claims settlement are not in question among the Inuvialuit. Only the means to achieve these objectives are under review." (p. 31873).

For the Indian Brotherhood of the Northwest Territories, both the means and objectives are taken closer to resolution. In his final submission on behalf of the Brotherhood, Mr. Bell takes land claims to its political conclusion. In the position the Dene take, the term 'land claims' is inadequate as a descriptor for the alternative to colonization sought by them.

> In short, the Dene seek, in that position, recognition of their right to self-determination within Confederation and the establishment of the necessary institutions, legal protections and official practices which will give full effect to that right. (P.I. Vol. 203:32208).

In this testimony, the Indian Brotherhood puts forward a seven point elaboration of their position. The first claims

the Dene "right to recognition, self-determination, growth and development as a people and as a nation."[5] (p. 32222). The implications, which are subsequently spelled out, are for a Dene government within Confederation. This government is to have jurisdiction over Dene institutions within a geographic area. This claim to nationhood overrides and provides for the eventual resolution of more specific demands for land claims, control of education and preservation of language and culture.

The most recent move towards its objectives was a statement of the Dene national negotiating committee to the Minister for Northern Affairs, Warren Allmand, on July 14th, 1977. Excerpts from this appeared in The Edmonton Journal, July 26th, 1977. The statement fully endorses an earlier claim by the Inuit Northwest Territories Land Claims Commission calling for an Inuit Territory with an Inuit government. It goes on to specify a proposed division of the Northwest Territories into three self-governing geographical territories corresponding to the present population distribution of Dene, Inuit and non-native.[6]

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[5]The ambiguities of terms such as 'nation,' 'nationality' and 'nationalism' will only be acknowledged here. For a discussion of the concept 'nation' and its significance to the Dene see Russell's article "The Dene Nation and Confederation in the Watkins (1977) edition.

[6]In this submission, no reference is made to the Metis. It should be noted that in the final submission to the Berger Inquiry by Mr. R. Hardy for the Metis Association of the N.W.T., its policies are somewhat different from those of the Dene and the Inuit. Hardy claims that the Metis are a distinct

The relationship of these territories to the federal government would resemble the present federal/provincial division of powers.

This, then, is the ultimate implication of contextualizing vernacular language claims within a referential speech community. For the Dogrib speakers, the resolution of their demands for vernacular education, and related issues such as local control of education, lies in an overall Dene Nation and not in the implementation of a form of bilingual education or local control presently confined to Rae Edzo.

In this application of speech community which exists referentially, certain ramifications become obvious. The speech community has, in Hymes' terms, been postulated as a social unit rather than a linguistic entity. However, as has been shown, that social unit is not a fixed entity, either in physical or temporal terms. The speech community was born of a transforming process in which the social unit is continuously being re-shaped and re-named. As the re-shaping takes place, the differences and similarities deemed to be relevant by its members will set new boundaries. Linguistic differences may come to be seen as crucial or they may be overlooked for the sake of a greater overall unity. If the raison d'etre around

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group with their future in developments such as the proposed Mackenzie Valley pipeline. They express the need to have their future safeguarded, but by the Federal Government rather than the Dene nation.

which a referential speech community integrates symbolically is removed, other speech communities will be acknowledged. It is at this point that more attention is likely to be given to the actual linguistic means and experiential speech communities.

If implications of this study for education in the region of the Mackenzie Valley are to be suggested, they are these. In view of the proposed political relationship between native groups in the Northwest Territories and the Federal Government previously referred to, bilingual education may be considered an exigency.[7] However, it is not a matter of linguistic accommodation within the existing school structure. This investigation has pointed to more significant concerns with the system of schooling. These in turn have been circumscribed by broader socio-political questions which ultimately can only be resolved in the restructuring of the relationship of native groups to the total society.

In this study, the acknowledgement of a speech community which may be said to exist referentially has been shown to have important consequences. Over and above the

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[7]Berger's comments on the English language are worth noting: "English has not been wholly an instrument of acculturation: rather, Dene groups have used it as a lingua franca to achieve a measure of unity among themselves that was never possible when they spoke only the five Athabascan languages. They have used English, not to become like us, but to tell us what they wish to be themselves. English has become one of their principal means of expressing their desire for self-determination. It is English that has, paradoxically, helped the Dene to insist upon their identity as a distinct people." (1977:111).

immediate consequences for education mentioned previously, it has implications in terms of explanatory adequacy. When the two interpretations of 'speech community' were proposed, it was pointed out that they were not considered to be mutually exclusive. If the knowledge and sharing of a linguistic code is taken as the determinant, experiential speech communities can be found within a symbolically integrated speech community. It follows then that vernacular language claims can be interpreted on two different bases. There is a danger that language maintenance claims interpreted on the basis of an experiential speech community rest implicitly on explanations in terms of ethnicity. However, as has been shown in this study, when these claims are seen in the context of a referential speech community, the explanation forces us to go beyond ethnicity.

In most general terms, this study has pointed to the political[8] nature of vernacular language claims and has given credence to Gaarder's claim that folk bilingualism is an indication of a political stance. The overriding question that native people addressed through the Berger Inquiry was the power to control their own destinies and shape their own future. It is expressed with respect to land claims, control of

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[8]Like many other human activities, 'politics' is difficult to isolate and enjoys many definitions. Cohen (1967) takes Laswell's often quoted "who gets what, when, and how" definition, pointing out that though its affinities with economics are obvious, politics is basically concerned with the dimension of power.

education and more broadly, cultural and linguistic self determination. Its final manifestation is seen in the basically political nature of the resolutions proposed for the Northwest Territories. G. Manuel, appearing before the inquiry on behalf of the Northwest Territories Indian Brotherhood and the Metis Association claims that the major problem facing native people is a political one.

> The time is long overdue for the establishment of a new social, political and economic order where the Indians and the white society can co-operate and interact in a positive manner with pride and dignity. (P.I. Vol. 143: 21774-5).

CHAPTER 5

VERNACULAR BILINGUAL EDUCATION

Having examined the broad socio-political ramifications of vernacular language claims as reflected in the Berger Inquiry it remains to consider the implications of this study for vernacular bilingual education in more general terms. Any suggestions that are made however, must be accompanied by the qualification that the limitations of this study and the general paucity of social science research into bilingual education imposes restrictions upon any interpretations made. So far the term 'bilingual education' has been used very loosely. As a starting point, the definition adopted by Anderson is useful.

> Bilingual Education is instruction in two languages and the use of those two languages as mediums of instruction for any part or all of the school curriculum. Study of the history and culture associated with a student's mother tongue is considered an integral part of bilingual education. (1970:12).

As an alternative mode of education, bilingual education appeals to a wide range of situations and the need to distinguish the different forms becomes apparent. Several typologies have been suggested, ranging from Spolsky's (1974) dichotomy of 'child salvage' and 'language salvage'; Fishman and Lovas' (1970) typology of 'transitional'. 'monoliterate' and 'biliterate' (i) and (ii), through to Gaarder's (1976)

socio-political elaboration and Mackey's (1972) complex categorization of up to ninety different patterns based on variables from family to nation. For the purpose of this study, it will suffice to adopt a simple dichotomy which differentiates bilingual education for language shift (transitional) and bilingual education for language maintenance. Though it may not address the diverse range of bilingual programmes, it focuses on final outcomes in terms of the marked language and addresses the sociolinguistic dialectic in the school.

Transitional Bilingual Education

In simplified terms, transitional bilingual programmes use the mother tongue as a bridge to the national or standard language, while maintenance programmes ideally use both languages, throughout the education process. Maintenance programmes in which the mother tongue is a vernacular language are as yet unrealized in the United States, Canada or Australia. The overall emphasis in native education in the English speaking world is to use the vernacular in the early years of schooling as a bridge to the acquisition of English. Kjolseth (1972), a recent critic of bilingual education, claims that over ninety percent of the programmes in the United States (and analogies can be drawn to Australia and Canada) approximate programmes in which the mother tongue is used only to a maximum of three years. It should be remembered that this figure also includes the many bilingual programmes which use languages

of wider communication, especially Spanish in the United States, so that the situation of native vernaculars taken alone would represent an even higher percentage of transitional programmes.

Kjolseth elaborates upon other features of such transitional programmes. They essentially originate from outside the speech community by elite administrators. Community involvement as such, he claims, is token opinion seeking rather than a concomitant of any decision making process. Furthermore, the bilingual nature of such programmes is decidedly one way; children speaking the non-standard language are involved and there is no attempt on the part of speakers of the standard language to learn the other. He attacks the narrowness of evaluation which focuses on individual academic, linguistic and psychological measures. His linguistic critique of such programmes is clearly stated in that:

> The school's policy is essentially a "burnt bridges" approach: the ethnic language is seen only as a bridge to the nonethnic language - one to be crossed as rapidly as possible and then destroyed, at least as a legitimate medium of general instruction. (1972:106).

The model described by Kjolseth is what he calls the 'assimilationist' model. The warning he sounds is all the more ominous for he was, himself, an early advocate of bilingual education and pluralism in the United States and has been for many years, closely involved in promoting various bilingual programmes. Similar such warnings have been sounded in the United States by Gaarder (1970), Seda

(1972), Macías (1973), Fishman (1976) and in Australia by Harris (1975). In its transitional mode, bilingual education is assimilationist and little, if at all, removed from the deficit hypothesis of earlier monolingual English programmes.

Kjolseth's warning becomes particularly pertinent to this study if the guidelines for vernacular education in the Northwest Territories are examined. The current curriculum handbook for the Northwest Territories makes the claim that:

> The language by which you "Get Ahead" in the North is English. Whether you want an education, a job, mobility in terms of the larger Canadian society, or what-you-will, in the final analysis what happens to the individual will be almost solely dependent upon his competency in the English language. (p. 81).

The bilingual approach aims by high school level to have the instructional program wholly IN the English language with provision made for the study OF the native language. In the 1976 ordinance on education in the Northwest Territories, the local education authority may prescribe the language of instruction in kindergarten and the two years following. Beyond that "the Executive Member shall prescribe, after consultation with the local education authority, the language of instruction." (p. 47). Transition to English as a second language is explicitly stated.

Many arguments are raised to promote bilingual education and it is necessary to investigate the rationale behind the introduction of vernaculars into the school system. The overriding argument presented is that education in the child's mother tongue is sound. Psychologically, for non-English speaking children, the first days at school are apt to

be confusing and an educational system that recognizes the child's past experience is of positive advantage to the child's self image. Though relevant research is scarce, this argument appears to be strongly supported by what John and Horner suggest is "common sense testimony of those who have had to give up their mother tongue to become educated in an English-speaking system." (1971:xxiii). The testimony of such a person is expressed in more formal terms by Gaarder in his statement to Senator Yarborough's Special Subcommittee on Bilingual Education on May 18th, 1967:

> Language is the most important exteriorization or manifestation of the self, of the human personality. If the school, the all-powerful school, rejects the mother tongue of an entire group of children, it can be expected to affect seriously and adversely those children's concept of their parents, their homes, and of themselves. (Cited in Anderson and Boyer, 1970:50).

A more substantially researched area of the psychological significance of bilingual education is that of language and cognition. Before he enters school, the child has already had years of cognitive development and language experience. The argument that early school experiences should be based on the mother tongue assumes that language plays an important role in cognitive development. However, not all psychologists agree on the causal relationship between the two. Though the different approaches to language and cognition will not be entered into at this point, Lawton's comment in his chapter on "Language and Thought" is appropriate:

> It also seems that now psychologists are agreed that there are forms of thought which are non-verbal but that, without language, thinking is limited. (1970: 38).

The quantitative research in bilingual education that relates to this issue involves testing for I.Q. and achievement in school subjects. Though doubts and fears still arise about the academic impact of bilingual education, recent analyses, especially those emerging from Canadian studies, suggest no untoward influence of bilingualism. Barik and Swain (1977) report research findings on four studies; the Ottawa study; the Toronto study; the Elgin study; the Peel study, which generally point to favourable results with respect to French and other subjects. The generalizability of these results where one has two language of wider communication to native education in vernaculars, is of course problematic. More closely related are the now familiar citings from Modiano's findings from the Chiapas highlands. The evidence of these findings, supported by studies in Ghana and the Philippines, she claims:

> shows that youngsters of linguistic minorities learn to read with greater comprehension in the national language when they first learn to read in their mother tongue than when they receive all reading instruction in the national language. It is less confusing and discouraging to learn one new skill with known material than to learn two new and only somewhat related skills with material that has no meaning. (1968:43).

Evaluations of bilingual education in the setting of native vernaculars in the United States, Canada or Australia are still forthcoming.[1] Recognizing that there may as yet be

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[1]Even when they become available, it must be cautioned that many variables such as socio-economic, linguistic and educational factors will be difficult to disentangle to arrive at the effects of bilingual education per se.

no conclusive evidence that the use of vernaculars in education is unequivocally beneficial and accepting that there exist practical difficulties in programme implementation, bilingual education is gaining more and more favour with educationalists. The rationale is perhaps best summed up by the now familiar U.N.E.S.C.O. statement:

> It is axiomatic that the best medium for teaching a child is his mother tongue. Psychologically, it is the system of meaningful signs that in his mind works automatically for expression and understanding. Sociologically, it is a means of identification among members of the community to which he belongs. Educationally, he learns more quickly through it than through an unfamiliar linguistic medium. (1953:11).

For the educational institution, the use of vernaculars shows promise of achieving with native children what the schools have failed to achieve previously.[2] Politically this is crucial for a society that espouses democratic ideals and equal opportunity for all and yet is faced with gross inequities, particularly in relation to its native people. In the United States, Canada and Australia, each boasting of high standards of living, the failure of the educational institution to meet the needs of the indigenous populations is a national stigma. Following the failure of compensatory education (based on a deficit model of social-psychological development) to bring

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[2]Based on an acculturative framework, the school has been seen as the agency through which children from culturally different backgrounds are socialized to be able to participate in the social, economic and political mainstream of the dominant society. When this has not occurred, rather than questioning the assumptions underlying the acculturation model, token modification of the school situation has taken place. For a critique of the acculturation framework see Hedley (1971).

about long term benefits,[3] transitional bilingual education, which recognizes the child's first language, is functionally expedient for the educational institution, even if it does not achieve in pragmatic terms what it promises. Just as the American programme Head Start and similar projects in the 1960's were short term palliatives, transitional bilingual education appears as a genuine effort to implement change. If policy makers wanted to oppose bilingual education, grounds of insufficient or even contradictory evidence could be found.

Although bilingual education which accepts the child's mother tongue may appear to be a radical departure from earlier monolingual policies, it should be remembered that education in the vernaculars has its colonial precedents. The history of colonial education does not provide an easily definable policy towards vernacular languages. Different colonial powers adopted divergent attitudes to languages in education. Spencer, in an article on colonial language policies reviews this divergence within the African colonial situation. He suggests a major distinction between what was an almost total negation of vernaculars to some acceptance of their use in the educational setting. This he illustrates with examples from British, Belgian, French and Portugese

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[3]Dittmar (1976) discusses recent critiques of the deficit hypothesis and adds his own Marxist perspective of compensatory education concluding that "the true function of compensatory programmes has become clear. Instead of real emancipation aimed at improving the living conditions of the lower class, they contribute to the integration of the lower class in such a way as to stabilize the system." (p. 101).

colonies. The British and Belgian administration favoured the use of vernaculars,[4] while French and Portugese policies aimed at discouraging local languages. Though Spencer suggests consequences of these differences, he underlines what was common to all colonial powers, regardless of their interest or dis-interest in the vernacular languages:

> It was obviously in the interests of all the colonial powers to produce a small body of Africans, educated through the metropolitan language, to serve as minor functionaries and interpreters; and no colonial power would have been so quixotic as to deny itself such useful and necessary auxiliaries by insisting on education entirely through the vernaculars, even if this had been possible. The degree to which the languages of Africa were encouraged and utilized, therefore, was always limited; and the metropolitan language dominated the educational, administrative and mercantile colonial structures, irrespective of any concern shown for the vernaculars. (1969:537-538).

Where vernacular usage was encouraged, it was only for the early stages of education. This was with the understanding that early training in the vernaculars would aid rather than impede the acquisition of English. This historical precedent of transitional bilingual education should be noted for its relevance to the present situation of native people in Northern Canada. There also, the English language dominates in what is still a colonial structure and education in the vernacular, where it exists, is for transition

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[4]According to Spencer, as early as 1816, the Church Missionary Society suggested the advantages of vernacular literacy for religious indoctrination. By 1955, over sixty vernacular languages in the British colonies had been scripted. This alone should caution against undue optimism that vernacular education can be taken as an independent variable able to transform the outcomes of education in a colonial situation.

to English.

Maintenance Bilingual Education

So far, no attention has been given to maintenance bilingual education. In his discussion, the model Kjolseth proposes for maintenance programmes is what he calls the 'pluralistic' model. Some of its features that he discusses are antithetical to his 'assimilationist' model. The programme originates from within the community and becomes a focus for political mobilization. Community involvement extends beyond just opinion seeking to participation in the decision making process. The bilingual programme, he proposes, is two way with both groups (which he labels 'ethnic' and 'nonethnic') learning in their own and the other language. In more general terms, Kjolseth sees the pluralistic model acting as a stimulus and encouragement for "a democratic forum for the resolution of conflicts and differing interests within and between the ethnic and nonethnic communities." (1972:103).

Though it appears to be radically different from the assimilationist model, Kjolseth himself expresses reservations about the effectiveness of the plural model, primarily in terms of language but also in terms of social change generally. His linguistic critique is presented in a series of postulates which he admits are yet to be empirically tested, but which argue that a maintenance programme "may be an even more potent, albeit less visible, instrument of linguistic counter-insurgency than the transfer-assimilation method." (1972:113). What he

questions are such factors as differentiation of the ethnic language to the advantage of an elite ethnic minority. The differentiation which presently occurs on the basis of distinct languages may be transferred to variations within the ethnic language which Kjolseth refers to as 'high' and 'low' varieties. These varieties, corresponding to a small middle class ethnic minority and a lower class majority may give the former power and control in local affairs. At the same time Kjolseth foresees an increase in the ethnic elite's use of the nonethnic language which would,

> place them in a particularly advantaged position for being easily co-opted by supra-ethnic interests dedicated to a colonial policy of indirect rule and make more difficult any attempts on the part of the ethnic majority to form independent sources of power and influence.[5] (1972:116).

Kjolseth's discussion points to many significant areas of concern that need to be probed in relation to language maintenance. They suggest that bilingual education, whether it aims at language transfer or language maintenance may set in motion dynamics with much broader socio-political consequences. They also confirm that any discussion of bilingual education can not be divorced from a consideration of power relations in society. Whether the language involved is that of an immigrant ethnic group or an indigenous population, the position of that

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[5]Fishman, in a discussion of policy perspectives on bilingual education cites Gonzalez, Pedraza and Zentella (1976) who have called for a greater acceptance of all varieties of Spanish and English spoken by Puerto Ricans in the U.S.A. Class stratification, they claim, exists across national cultures and "the 'dominant', 'pure' and 'high' cultures being packaged by the U.S. have only one purpose - the derailment of the class struggle in the U.S. (p. 80)." (Cited in Fishman, 1976 b:10).

group vis-a-vis the dominant Anglo-speaking community is crucial.

Conclusion

Though most of the discussion of maintenance bilingual programmes has emanated from concerns with languages of minorities whose mother tongues have national status elsewhere, the doubts expressed warrant attention when vernacular languages are considered. Having critiqued vernacular bilingual education in its transitional mode and anticipated possible deleterious effects of maintenance programmes, one is left to question any inclusion of vernacular languages within the school system. In the conclusion of his recent analysis of the state of bilingual education, Fishman warns that:

> At best the school can only be an ally of dedicated and intact homes, of an organized and insistent community, of an awakened and unrelenting consciousness, of a poltically sophisticated power base. (1976 b:63).

In much of the discussion on bilingual education, the disenchantment with the part played by the school in language maintenance fails to focus more specifically on the role of the school in society. Leaving aside questions of language maintenance, it is necessary first to examine the ability of the school to instigate any measure of social change. Notwithstanding changes that have taken place, the school continues to be a formal institution of a capitalist society. As such, its ability to overcome inequities of social structure is increasingly questioned. Bowles and Gintis, for example, in reviewing schooling in capitalist America state:

The educational system, basically neither adds to nor

> subtracts from the degree of inequality and repression originating in the economic sphere. Rather it reproduces and legitimates a preexisting pattern in the process of training and stratifying the work force. (1976:265).

As the survey of the Berger material has substantiated, for native people this preexisting pattern is one which emerges from a colonial relationship. According to Flores (1973) the inequities of colonialism extend beyond those of class in a capitalist society. The complex pattern of racial and cultural domination he claims, produces privileges for all members of the dominant society regardless of their class. While education remains an institution of the dominant capitalist society, its role in seeking to reproduce and legitimate the colonial relationship must be more carefully examined.

This study of vernacular language claims arose out of concerns that in the implementation of bilingual education involving vernacular languages, claims for language maintenance may be interpreted too narrowly. If they are interpreted on the basis of isolated communities and distinct languages, responding to them is readily rationalized to be bilingual education as presently witnessed in many parts of the Anglo-speaking world. However when the context is broadened other responses are called for. By extending the notion of speech community as this study has done, the response to vernacular language claims calls for an examination of the colonial relationship and more particularly education as a colonial institution. The dynamics of bilingual education have been

seen to emerge from the relative social and political status of the Anglo-speaking and vernacular language groups.

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APPENDIX A

This appendix indicates the references to education and language in the community hearings of the Berger Commission Inquiry. Several qualifications should be noted. The references listed one only those made by native people. 'Education' has been taken as the formal institution of schooling and excludes that aspect of education otherwise subsumed under traditional enculturation.

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